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NEW YORK TIMES  
31 January 1986

# U.S. Aides See Chance of Pact On Avoiding War in Europe

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30 — Eastern bloc and Western nations may be close to an agreement at the Stockholm conference on ways to reduce the risk of war in Europe, American officials say.

The conference, which reconvened Tuesday, is considering measures that would require each side to give notification of military maneuvers and information about its forces in Europe.

An agreement could be the first East-West arms control accord since the signing of the second strategic arms agreement in 1979. Progress at the talks could also encourage success at the next summit meeting between President Reagan and Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader, later this year, according to Robert L. Barry, the American delegate to the conference.

Mr. Barry said last week that there was a "good chance" of making progress at Stockholm.

## Cutting Chances of War

The talks, formally known as the Conference on Confidence and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, were called for in the Helsinki agreement of 1975.

The Helsinki accords outlined a series of "confidence building" measures intended to reduce the risk of miscalculation and surprise attack. It also addressed humanitarian concerns. The conference now going on in Stockholm is working on the Helsinki measures on confidence building.

Mr. Barry said the Administration hopes to conclude a conference agreement before November, when a meeting is scheduled to review progress since the signing of the Helsinki accords.

James E. Goodby, the former head of the delegation, said in an interview that he also detected some positive movement in the talks. He said there was "about a 50-50 chance" for an agreement before November.

One sticking point in the talks has been the Soviet insistence that an agreement require that one side notify the other about air and naval operations as well as ground exercises.

## Western Nations' Position

Western nations have rejected that demand, saying naval and air activities that are not related to ground movements should not be included. At the same time, Western nations have said some information about naval and air exercises that are connected with ground maneuvers could be provided.

In his Jan. 15 arms proposal, however, Mr. Gorbachev backed away from the previous Soviet demand regarding naval exercises, saying this issue could be deferred for future consideration. He did not say anything about air exercises.

One expert said Mr. Gorbachev "gave away something that has no chance of being accepted." Still, he added, the concession may signal a general willingness to achieve an accord.

Despite this, experts say that there are still some difficult issues.

One important issue is verification. Western nations have said any agreement should provide for on-site inspection in case one side fears that the other might be carrying out some unannounced exercises.

The Soviet Union, however, has so far said "national technical means," such as satellite reconnaissance, and consultations should be sufficient to verify that no undisclosed exercises are going on. The procedures allowing the sides to observe each other's announced military exercises also need work.

## Location of Forces

Another key topic is the measure requiring each side to disclose the location of military forces in Europe. Western nations have said such information should be given annually, but the Soviet Union has said this information would be a form of espionage, Mr. Barry said.

A further matter of contention is the Soviet proposal that a limit of 40,000 soldiers be set for ground maneuvers. Western nations have pointed out that some North Atlantic Treaty Organization exercises involve far more soldiers.

The two sides are also far apart on the issue of which military units should be covered by an agreement. Western nations say notification should be given of maneuvers involving army divisions. But Soviet divisions are smaller than American divisions, and the Soviet Union has said the notification provisions should apply to a specific number of men.

Although significant differences remain, Mr. Barry said that "there has been a very definite evolution in the Soviet position" over the last few years.